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## The Recent Debate on the "New Quest"

JAMES M. ROBINSON

I HAVE been asked to analyze the development of the new quest of the historical Jesus since 1959, to bring up to date the presentation in my book, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*.<sup>1</sup> Since at the time of the second impression of that book in 1961 it was not possible even to include the additional material found in the German edition of 1960,<sup>2</sup> such an up-dating of the material is highly necessary. The quantity of literature which has appeared since 1959 exceeds considerably what had appeared prior to that date. And, although much of this added material has been repetitious and has hardly advanced the debate, some significant developments have taken place. They have their focus in the emergence of an opposition which had hardly become visible by 1959.

### I

In spite of various inadequacies in my publication of 1959, it has served its major

purpose of calling forth an American discussion of a new trend in German theology at a time when the German discussion was still in a formative stage, and with the result that the discussion could become a two-way affair. The very fact that the National Association of Biblical Instructors is presenting a symposium on this topic in 1961, only seven years after the publication of Ernst Käsemann's programmatic essay,<sup>3</sup> whereas the NABI symposium on demythologizing in 1957 came sixteen years after Rudolf Bultmann's proposal of 1941, is symptomatic of the increasing synchronization of the two theological traditions which should be an attainable objective in our day.<sup>4</sup> A series of symposia to be published by Harper & Brothers under the title, *New Frontiers in Theology: Discussions Among German and American Theologians*, is to appear beginning in 1963 with volumes entitled *The Later Heidegger and Theology* and *The New Hermeneutics*.<sup>5</sup> We may express the hope that future NABI symposia will help this series achieve its purpose.

The extent to which the new quest of the historical Jesus has become a two-way conversation is indicated by the fact that Rudolf Bultmann's reply to his students before the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences<sup>6</sup> not only included critiques of my book and of his German students, but also was able to appeal for support to letters from Edwin M. Good of Stanford University and Van A. Harvey of Southern Methodist University, and to a review by R. H. Fuller of Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Accordingly, one of the significant new aspects of the discussion with which we can appropriately begin is the American participation and the particular role it plays.

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Since the original quest of the historical Jesus never really ended in America, we sense very acutely that the basic *Problematik* of the new quest is whether it can be anything other than a revival of the old quest with all its weaknesses, i.e., whether it can be genuinely post-Bultmannian in retaining Bultmann's valid criticisms of the old quest. To be sure, the very persistence of the original quest at the grass roots means that the new one can count on a grass-roots receptivity. Indeed, one may expect a blurring of the distinction between the original quest and the new one—a setback I sought to avoid by devoting the first half of my book to a presentation of Bultmann's valid argument that the original quest was historically impossible and theologically illegitimate. Of course, it is also possible that one will change with the changing times. Thus, Ernest Cadman Colwell, speaking before this Association in 1959 on prospects for New Testament scholarship during the next fifty years, was able to refer to the new quest as typical of the research of the future, not simply because he as a student of Shirley Jackson Case was convinced that Christianity must build upon the historical Jesus, but also because he believed that the socio-historical method of Case must be replaced or at least supplemented by the new methods he had found exemplified in Powicke and Bloch and which are usually associated with the names of Dilthey and Collingwood.<sup>7</sup>

The *Problematik* involved in this unbroken continuity with the original quest, which is for better or worse the American *Sitz im Leben* of the new quest, becomes quite visible in a very recent American life of Jesus, Morton Scott Enslin's *The Prophet from Nazareth*.<sup>8</sup> In this volume, Form-criticism and its kerygmatic theology are brushed aside with the standard caricature: "In place of the historical Jesus, whom they assume it is impossible to discover, and thus for whom further search is an unwarranted waste of time, they set the figure of the Eternal Christ and his part in the all-central

epic of salvation—the technical term is *Heilsgeschichte*—which comprise the one and only important chapter of all cosmic history."<sup>9</sup> By thus presenting Form-criticism as maintaining the obviously absurd position that we can know nothing of Jesus, the original questers seek to eliminate their critics and to continue their quest as if nothing had happened. It is no surprise that in such a situation a young and vigorous Bultmannian systematician, Schubert M. Ogden, should take a first look at the new quest and complain, "But it still remains a fair question whether the extent of the alleged 'newness' may not depend entirely too much upon seeing it against the background of a highly over-simplified and even false impression of Bultmann's own position."<sup>10</sup> When Ogden then comments in a footnote that "this question is even raised, though no doubt unintentionally, by Robinson himself," I would merely respond that I quite intentionally questioned the caricature of Bultmann's position and even went to the trouble of collecting a long footnote of quotations from Bultmann to disprove the caricature. However, in spite of all that we can do, the caricature persists as a foil for the continuing quest of the "compelling personality" and "unflinching bravery" of Jesus.<sup>11</sup>

It is as just one more instance of this well-known tradition that the talk of a new quest of the historical Jesus strikes many ears. The younger generation, for whom that well-known tradition is anathema, are therefore tempted to react to the new quest by rejecting it out of hand. Paul W. Meyer puts the matter bluntly: "In form, this [new quest] parallels perfectly the older liberal understanding of faith as the reproduction, in my religious experience, of Jesus' feeling of Sonship in relation to God—and it is like the other totally dependent on historical familiarity with Jesus' person. We seem to have here a complete capitulation to the heirs of Schweitzer."<sup>12</sup> And, significantly enough, Meyer alludes to Walter Bell Denny's *The Career and Significance of Jesus*

(1934) as "an extreme example"—as if to say, bad company corrupts good manners. Hence, if any advocate of the new quest is to make his point in the present situation, he must go to great pains to argue that the new quest does *not* "parallel perfectly" the old. The new quest does not attempt to discover how Jesus felt, for the records tell us not how he felt but what his significance was. Jesus' understanding of existence was not his stream of consciousness, but the understanding of existence which emerged in history from his words and deeds. It is this, not his personality or the alleged specifics of his biography, which is his historic person. Neither is faith to be regarded as the imitating reproduction of a human stance. Faith is a response to God, to the same eschatological act of God which the kerygma proclaims as one with the event of Jesus. Faith is not totally dependent on historical familiarity with Jesus' person, for that eschatological act of God is proclaimed in the kerygma. Indeed, it is as a result of faith in the kerygma—which itself points to Jesus as the *locus* of God's action—that the *fides quaerens intellectum* as theological reflection enters upon the new quest. Hence, the new quest need not and should not be "a complete capitulation to the heirs of Schweitzer"; and, in fact, I conclude my review-article of *The Prophet from Nazareth* with the statement, "The critical reader of this book is compelled to become a Bultmannian."<sup>18</sup>

This *Problematik* of the new quest's situation within the context of the old is present within systematic theology as well as in the New Testament aspect of the debate. Thus, John Macquarrie welcomes the new quest as support for his insistence that the historian should provide the kerygma with an "empirical anchor," a "minimal core of factuality." What Macquarrie has in mind is suggested by his criticism that a demythologizing interpretation of the stilling of the storm denies "any objective reference in the story," i.e., denies "that Christ had in fact stilled a storm on the lake." Over against this, Macquarrie affirms, "the minimal assertion is

that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.'"<sup>14</sup> But anyone who expects such a statement as this last from a *historian* simply does not understand the limits set on the historian's trade. And, indeed, Macquarrie's contention is more reminiscent of the positivistic program of Ethelbert Stauffer, roundly rejected by all involved in the new quest, than of the new quest itself. To be sure, Macquarrie states his "minimal core" in language much like that of the new quest: "Simply that there was someone who once exhibited in history the possibility of existence which the kerygma proclaims."<sup>16</sup> He apparently means by this that the reality proclaimed by the kerygma is to be proven historically to have taken place in the case of Jesus. But again, this reality is God's eschatological, saving action, and, as such, it simply cannot be proven historically. This act of God is *faith's* "fact" and that is why no "minimal core" of this kind of "factuality" can ever be provided by the historian. To be sure, Bultmann rightly identifies the gospel as consisting for Paul in the having-happenedness of the eschatological event once and for all, and it is that message which is directed to me as the proclamation that it is happening in my life. But this does not mean that the gospel is to be proved in the one case and believed in the other, but rather that I believe it to have happened once and for all when I believe that it happens now to me. This is the way the Christian understands his existence. But to prove that this understanding of existence emerges from the historical Jesus is not to prove that such an understanding is true, i.e., it does not prove that God has acted or does act. Nor can the desire for a "minimal core" of proven security be the motive for inquiring after Jesus' understanding of existence. The real motive lies within the context of *fides quaerens intellectum*, of theology reflecting upon its faith; it does not lie outside faith in a realm that supposedly furnishes a proven access into faith. Hence, Carl Michalson is correct in his criticism of Mac-

quarrie: "This positivistic drive leads Macquarrie to misinterpret the purpose of the current revival of the 'question of the historical Jesus.'"<sup>16</sup>

## II

The most significant thing that has taken place in the discussion within German circles since 1959 is not the endless flood of publications. (These are often more impressive in quantity than quality; the 710-page symposium, *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, published in East Berlin, is a most glaring instance.<sup>17</sup>) Of primary significance instead is the emergence of an opposition in Germany, paralleling that in the United States and emerging for much the same reason. For previously the surprise caused by a Bultmannian proposing a new quest was only equalled by the way in which the new quest at first swept everything before it. The "hefty debate" originally predicted by Käsemann has only now begun to emerge—although not quite as he expected. For he probably did not anticipate that he would himself be pushed more and more toward the opposition by the way in which his main competitor for the mantle of leadership in Bultmannian circles, Ernst Fuchs, would be combining the new quest with a revival of nineteenth-century theology.<sup>18</sup> Käsemann himself has most recently identified the fanatical apocalypticism emerging from the Easter experience—not from any imminent expectation in Jesus' eschatology—as the "matrix of Christian theology."<sup>19</sup> Hence, *Heilsgeschichte*, rather than the new quest, seems a better way to express the primitive Christian concern for history.

In a somewhat parallel way Hans Conzelmann, as long as he was at Zürich with Gerhard Ebeling, was willing to share in the new quest, merely warning against potential dangers in the position of Fuchs and Ebeling. But when he went to Göttingen, where an unbroken continuity with the original quest is—in the person of Joachim Jeremias—most ably represented in Germany,

Conzelmann withdrew from the new quest by arguing that although one was free to inquire as to the historical Jesus the matter was irrelevant to Christian faith.<sup>20</sup>

The emergence of critical reservations concerning the new quest is not confined to such more-sensed-than-fully-documented feathers in the wind. For Bultmann's reply to his own students, first expressed in personal correspondence, was made public in an address before the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences on July 25, 1959 and was published in December, 1960.<sup>21</sup>

Bultmann begins his reply by distinguishing the question of the historical continuity between Jesus and the kerygma from the question of their material relation to each other. With respect to the question of historical continuity, first, he points out that his position does not deny a historical continuity. Such continuity is affirmed in his very insistence upon the "*dass*" rather than the "*was*," his insistence that the kerygma, while not interested in historical information about Jesus, was centrally concerned to affirm *that* the heavenly Lord was one with Jesus of Nazareth. Were there no Jesus there would have been no kerygma.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, Bultmann investigates current attempts to demonstrate a material relation that goes beyond this "*dass*." Some have sought to do this by arguing that the kerygma includes a picture of the historical Jesus and his work. But Bultmann points out that kerygmatic traditions prior to the gospels do not contain such a picture. Hence, the debate boils down to whether the gospels, as one form of the kerygma, can be regarded as a kerygmatic tradition which included a picture of the historical Jesus. Bultmann first argues the point, which by now is hardly contested, that the gospels do not have the kind and amount of historical information needed for a biography. To be sure, some historical information can be inferred from the Synoptics, information which Bultmann summarizes. He senses, however, that the great difficulty in working out a picture of the historical Jesus is that

one cannot know how Jesus faced his death. The predictions of the passion are *vaticinia ex eventu*, and the psychological argument by Fuchs emphasizing the impact of John the Baptist's death is not convincing, since Jesus did not understand himself as being at one with John. Furthermore, while we do not really know much about Jesus' last twenty-four hours, we must reckon with the possibility that he was convinced that he was to be killed for the wrong reason, and hence that he looked ahead to his coming death as a meaningless failure.

Now, worthwhile though such information about Jesus' death might be to someone writing a biography or a personality sketch, Jesus' relation to his death is theologically relevant at only one point: When the kerygma speaks of Jesus giving up his life and accepting his death, is this talk about Jesus of Nazareth or, despite the use of his name, talk not about him but about, e.g., a non-historical death-resurrection myth? If the former, it is not a matter of how he did or did not interpret what was going on in his final twenty-four hours; it is not a matter of his psychological processes, his stream of consciousness, at any given time. It is a matter of the emergence from Jesus of Nazareth of an understanding of existence consisting in the renunciation of the present evil eon in order to live instead out of the inbreaking kingdom of God as expressed, e.g., in the saying that he who loses his life saves it, and he who saves his life loses it. Bultmann refers to my "avoiding" the problem of our ignorance of how Jesus felt on Good Friday through taking recourse in the acceptance of death as pervasively emerging as Jesus' understanding of existence.<sup>23</sup> As a matter of fact my point is one Bultmann himself once made, in asserting that Paul's understanding of existence is implicit in Jesus' thought.<sup>24</sup> I am merely arguing that it is the implicitness of the kerygma in Jesus' understanding of existence that is required by the kerygma's reference to Jesus, if that reference is in fact a fitting one. Since this problem can be met without recourse to the insoluble

question of how Jesus felt in his final twenty-four hours, it is methodologically sound to avoid the *cul de sac*.

Bultmann's basic objection to the appeal to the Synoptics is that it involves a "per-version" of the actual situation with regard to those sources. "The combination of historical report and kerygmatic christology in the synoptics is not intended to legitimize the kerygma of Christ by means of history, but the other way around, to legitimize so-to-speak the history of Jesus as messianic, by putting it in the light of the kerygmatic christology."<sup>25</sup> Bultmann appeals in this connection to Hans Conzelmann's presentation of the messianic secret.<sup>26</sup> Now the view of the messianic secret originally held by Wrede and Bultmann does support Bultmann's present position: Unmessianic stories became acceptable only with the help of the excuse that Jesus kept his messiahship secret; i.e., the historical Jesus was acceptable only when he no longer posed a threat to Christology, but had been brought indirectly into conformity with Christology. But Bultmann has not revised his use of the messianic secret in the light of the fact that Conzelmann's view of the messianic secret is explicitly a reversal of the traditional interpretation of Wrede and Bultmann. Prior to Mark, the oral tradition had already become messianic or Christological. Mark's work consists in superimposing upon this Christological tradition his own paradoxical understanding of the kerygma, explicated in terms of the secretness of the messiahship. Thus, two kerygmaticizing phases are involved. The congregation made use of the Jesus-tradition to present its Christology. But this Christology seemed inadequately kerygmatic to Mark. So, rather than returning to the Pauline alternative of proclaiming only the cross, Mark accepted the principle that the Jesus-tradition must itself present the true kerygma. Accordingly, he corrected the Jesus-tradition to bring it into line with the true kerygma, thereby producing the *Gattung* "gospel." If thus the Jesus-tradition was corrected by the kerygma, that tradition

was already of such theological relevance that the question of whether it conformed to the kerygma was crucial not only for it but also for the kerygma.<sup>26a</sup>

This emergence of the Jesus-tradition into the light of history in Mark had a background in primitive Christian debate, to which recent research has drawn our attention. Since Bultmann has taught us that believing the kerygma involves committing ourselves to a specific understanding of existence, we are now in a position to correlate debates about Christian existence with Christological developments, and out of this combination to reconstruct meaningful segments of primitive Christian history previously only vaguely sensed. There emerged in Paul's Corinthian congregation, as can be inferred from First Corinthians, a proto-gnostic perception of existence, according to which the baptized are already in glory and thus are beyond historical existence with all its temptations and suffering.<sup>27</sup> According to this view, one is united with the resurrected Lord, not with the earthly Jesus; indeed, Jesus can even be anathematized (I Cor. 12:3).<sup>28</sup> Paul's letter insists upon the cross-"side" of the kerygma as the position where the Christian in this life is to be located, i.e. he insists that the kerygma proclaims the understanding of existence involved in taking up one's cross. Our resurrection must wait its turn, which is not yet but at the end. The power of the resurrection is in this life paradoxical, i.e., it is revealed by our suffering, since that power is the power to persist and endure in temptation and suffering. So Paul argues in terms of the cross, rather than in terms of the historical Jesus, although he does repudiate the anathematizing of Jesus.

If First Corinthians succeeded in its objective, Paul's procedure in this case is an instance of Bultmann's oft-repeated appeal to Paul (and John) as evidence that faith does not need the historical Jesus. But the plot thickens when one observes a new heresy being brought into Corinth by wandering evangelists, against whose position

Second Corinthians is directed.<sup>29</sup> This new heresy, rather than anathematizing Jesus, preaches "another Jesus" (II Cor. 11:4), and on the basis of this position the evangelists claim to be in a particular way "Christ's" (II Cor. 10:7). If one may infer from their view of a superior apostle their view of Jesus' superiority, the latter view seems to have consisted in regarding Jesus as an impressive, power-wielding, miracle-working *θεῖος ἀνὴρ*. In this new heresy much the same understanding of existence is advanced as had previously been advocated in Corinth by appeal to union with the heavenly Lord, except that now the appeal is made to a Jesus-tradition. The way that this invasion by a Jesus-tradition into the Pauline congregation threatens to sweep everything before it is reflected by the violence of Paul's "tearful letter" (II Cor. 10-13) and by the extreme anxiety he expresses over how the mission of Titus to Corinth with that letter will turn out (II Cor. 2:12-13; 7:5ff.). It is in this situation that Paul makes his dramatic statement against knowing Christ according to the flesh (II Cor. 5:16), a statement to which Bultmann so often appeals. In sharp contrast to such a fleshly understanding of Jesus and its resultant understanding of existence as a whole, Paul presents in Second Corinthians as in First Corinthians the understanding of existence which he identifies in the kerygma.

If by a supreme effort, yet merely by use of the kerygma and without recourse to a Jesus-tradition, Paul thus succeeded in reasserting his authority in Corinth against the "superlative apostles," this solution was to prove increasingly difficult to maintain, as the Jesus-tradition continued to circulate. Hence, by the time of Mark, what had been possible for Paul was no longer possible, and Mark had to meet the *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* Jesus-tradition on its own ground. His solution was the messianic secret (as interpreted for us today by Conzelmann). Mark's problem, resulting in his messianic secret, was not to impose messiahship upon a non-messianic

tradition, but to superimpose upon a *θεῖος ἀνὴρ* Jesus-tradition the paradox of Christian existence, the theology of the cross.<sup>80</sup>

It follows that Bultmann's incessant appeal to Paul and John for justification that the historical Jesus is not necessary is valid only in a certain situation and not in another. For it was impossible to worship a heavenly Lord in terms of one understanding of existence and then to identify that Lord with a Jesus-tradition expressing a reverse understanding of Jesus' existence. Once such a Jesus-tradition had gained common acceptance, it was in terms of that concrete situation that the gospel had to be proclaimed. (In every day and age, the gospel must be addressed to concrete situations.) Hence, the question concerning the necessity of a new quest can be relevantly answered not in the abstract, as Bultmann does, but only in the concrete, in the situation in which we find ourselves. And the truth is that our situation is one where hero worship is much more widespread than the acceptance of the kerygma as a norm of existence, where the endless spawning of lives of Jesus is one of the facts of life, and where a church that cannot claim Jesus for its message is in a very awkward position. Although we will not, I hope, turn our backs on the kerygma in another back-to-Jesus movement, but will instead proclaim the kerygma in our situation, we must nevertheless implement the kerygma's claim to be proclaiming a Lord who is one with Jesus, and we must do this by critical participation in the discussion of the Jesus-tradition of our day. To this extent, our situation reproduces that of the Synoptics rather than that of Paul.<sup>81</sup> When Bultmann then asks me whether the evangelists' interest in emphasizing the significance of history for faith goes beyond merely affirming the "*dass*," the fact that the Lord was a historical person,<sup>82</sup> I must reply: In the situation in which the synoptic authors found themselves, one could no longer maintain, as Paul could, the "*dass*," the historicalness of the worshipped Lord, merely by repeated assertion of the fact of his histori-

calness. In their situation—and ours—an emphasis upon the "*dass*," indispensable as it is for the kerygma and for Bultmann, could only be made in terms of the Jesus-tradition and not by ignoring that tradition through an exclusive proclamation of the Easter gospel. In their situation, the synoptic writers could retain the "*dass*" only by maintaining a position on the "*was*," i.e., only by making corrective use of the Jesus-tradition, by replacing the un-Christian understanding of existence which had invaded the Jesus-tradition, with a Christian understanding of existence. This is the *Sitz im Leben*, the *Tendenz*, which accounts for and justifies the practice of the Synoptics, so different from early kerygmatic texts and from Paul, and which also authenticates the Gospels as canonical and, with them, the validity and necessity of the new quest in our situation.

### III

Bultmann then turns to investigate the other way of handling the material relation between Jesus and the kerygma. If the first approach, typified by Althaus, has looked within the kerygma for details of the historical Jesus, the second approach, typified by the new quest, seeks an implicit kerygma in Jesus' deeds and words. This latter can be done either in terms of the traditional historical-critical method, which views the past objectively, or by supplementing that method through understanding history in terms of an existential relation to history ("existentialist interpretation"). From the standpoint of the historical-critical method alone, one can say that Jesus understood himself as an eschatological phenomenon, and that his call for a decision concerning his message implied a Christology, which was explicated in the Christology of the primitive church.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the historical continuity from Jesus the proclaimer to Jesus Christ the proclaimed is made intelligible. But this demonstration of continuity does



not answer the question of a material unity of Jesus' words and deeds with the kerygma. Nor can this explanation of historical phenomena of the past "mediate" an eschatological self-understanding to us today, in the way that the kerygma does.

It is the second alternative of "existentialist interpretation" which Bultmann's students have primarily followed and which seems more congenial to Bultmann himself. Accordingly, he commends my "methodological reflections" and the execution of this program by Herbert Braun.<sup>84</sup> But he argues that Ernst Fuchs has not carried through existentialist interpretation consistently and has, indeed, given up that method.<sup>85</sup> For the focus of Fuchs upon Jesus' conduct slides into a historical-psychological interpretation, through considering that conduct perceptible to an objectifying view. Jesus' self-understanding and his decision are treated by Fuchs as phenomena observable to the objectifying historian, i.e., Jesus' self-understanding is assumed to be self-conscious. Furthermore, the arguments by Fuchs that Jesus' parables defend his conduct and that he himself had made the same decision as he summoned others to make are regarded as psychological observations irrelevant to the understanding of existence implicit in Jesus' message. Rather than affirming that existentialist interpretation leads to our being called upon to believe, Fuchs reflects upon Jesus' faith and his prayer life. The guiding question of a material continuity between Jesus and the kerygma should rather have raised the question of whether those who hearkened to Jesus before Easter had the equivalent to faith in the kerygma.

There is an odd parallel between this criticism of Fuchs and the common criticism of Bultmann. According to this criticism, Bultmann's insistence upon the necessity of the unique event of the past is held to be inconsistent with, or at least unnecessary to, the self-understanding involved in the kerygma. For, according to Bultmann, the self-understanding involved in the kerygma con-

sists materially in understanding oneself as dependent for one's Christian existence on that once-for-all saving event. It seems inconsistent, therefore, that in investigating the self-understanding involved in Jesus' message, Bultmann should ignore this possibility and sense only the psychologizing overtones in the treatment by Fuchs. Fuchs has most recently shifted his terminology from Jesus' self-understanding to his time-understanding, which may clarify the distinction between psychological observations falling outside an existentialist interpretation and structures relevant to an existentialist interpretation.<sup>86</sup>

Bultmann criticizes similarly Ebeling,<sup>86a</sup> Bornkamm, and Käsemann for not distinguishing clearly between an existentialist interpretation and an objectifying view.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, he identifies Herbert Braun as the most consistent user of the existentialist method.<sup>88</sup> Braun does not ask about historical continuity but about the material consistency between the self-understanding in the proclamation of Jesus and the self-understanding in the proclamation of the church. By going behind the terminology to the latent intention, Braun succeeds in showing the material unity of the kerygma about Christ with the preaching of Jesus. Bultmann concedes that I, by "raising programmatically the requirement of existentialistic interpretation," attain the same goal. He accepts my formulations of this understanding of existence, but then questions whether, in my analysis of the formal structure of Jesus' sayings, I have succeeded in identifying in Jesus the existentialist dialectic of believing existence which he (Bultmann) finds first emerging explicitly in Paul and John.<sup>89</sup>

I am indebted to Schubert M. Ogden at this point for having called Bultmann's attention to statements of his own which are in substance the same as mine. Bultmann has replied to this that in his statements equivalent to mine, he had in mind the existentialist meaning of Jesus' message, while

in his statements denying the dialectic in Jesus, he had in mind Jesus' self-consciousness. Bultmann concedes that Jesus was conscious of a chronological "betweenness" with respect to the old and the new eons. But Jesus was not conscious of the fact that his message of this chronological interim served to place his hearers in a paradoxical, material "betweenness," with which my existentialist interpretation has to do, and which was to become conscious in Paul and John. Thus, a distinction is again made between "implicit" and "explicit," between "self-understanding" and "self-consciousness." Since my case does not depend on whether Jesus' self-understanding emerged into his self-consciousness, the material distinction between my position and Bultmann's tends to disappear. R. H. Fuller's argument that there is a "greater degree" of fulfillment in the kerygma than in Jesus, a view which Bultmann follows in criticizing the new quest,<sup>40</sup> thus becomes a distinction only on the conscious level of formulation, not at the existential level of meaning.

Indeed, Bultmann adds that there is a material difference between Jesus and the kerygma, in that the kerygma not only presents the paradox of future and present as a possibility for understanding one's existence, but also calls for faith in Jesus Christ. Here precisely is the point at issue between Bultmann and myself in our understandings of Jesus: I have argued that implicit in Jesus' message there is a structure corresponding to the kerygma's reference to the once-for-all event of cross and resurrection. I do not have in mind predictions of the passion or messianic claims, against which Bultmann rightly but one-sidedly protests, but rather the presupposition, upon which Jesus' ministry was built, of divine intervention in the last hour. Thus, the debate over whether we should study Jesus historically depends to some extent upon the outcome of such study—a fact which need embarrass not those who maintain the theological relevance of such study, but only those who deny it.

Yet the question of the material relationship between Jesus and the kerygma does not rest simply upon whether there is a consistency in the respective understandings of existence. For the "matter" involved in these understandings of existence is not simply or even primarily a human stance, but rather an understanding of God's action as the context of one's existence. It is this action of God as the "matter" or "content" of Jesus' understanding of existence that cannot be carried over into the present by historical research. Bultmann asks critically:

Does Jesus' eschatological consciousness mediate an eschatological self-understanding to him who perceives it as a historical phenomenon? But that is precisely what the kerygma intends, which as kerygma claims to be an eschatological occurrence (2 Cor. 5:18-20; Jn. 5:24; etc.), which as direct address grants death and life (2 Cor. 2:15f.). Does Jesus' claim of authority, perceived as a historical phenomenon, reach beyond the time of his earthly activity? Does the exhortation and reassurance of the historical Jesus, in its "unmediatedness", reach later generations? But it is precisely that which happens in the kerygma, in which it is not the *historical* Jesus but the *Exalted* who says: "All power has been given me." The Christ of the kerygma has so-to-speak pushed the historical Jesus to one side and now addresses with authority the hearer—every hearer. How then can one speak of a likeness of Jesus' activity with the kerygma in the sense that in Jesus' deed and word the kerygma is already contained *in nuce*?<sup>41</sup>

This argument seems to me to rest upon a failure on Bultmann's part to make a distinction between two meanings of the word kerygma. For "kerygma" is used to mean both the content of primitive Christian preaching and the act of preaching then and now. One can perhaps say that the English term, as popularized by C. H. Dodd, is most commonly used to refer to the content of primitive Christian preaching, whereas Bultmann normally has in mind the authoritative act of preaching. I would agree with Bultmann that the encounter with God does not take place in the modern historian's existentialist interpretation, but rather in the confrontation with the proclamation of the

church. But the use of the same word, kerygma, both for the church's act of preaching and for the content of the Easter message of cross and resurrection obscures the fact that the problem of Jesus' message as against that of the modern preacher is no different from the problem of primitive Christianity's message as against that of the modern preacher. A historian's reconstruction, for example, of the pre-Pauline Hellenistic or Palestinian kerygma is just as non-kerygmatic as is the historian's reconstruction of Jesus. Yet since the rise of historical-critical method, the historical kerygma has been a legitimate and necessary subject of inquiry—not to replace the minister's preaching, but to improve it. The denial of the relevance of the historical study of Jesus can be separated only in an arbitrary way from a denial of the relevance of historical-critical and existentialist exegesis of the New Testament text. Just as one can say that historical-critical and existentialist interpretation of the New Testament is not of the *esse* of preaching, but belongs to the *bene esse* of preaching, so one can say that in our situation the historical study of Jesus is not of the *esse* of preaching, but belongs to its *bene esse*. Thus, the basic refutation of Bultmann's position on the relevance of the historical Jesus is that if carried to its ultimate consequence it would prove too much. It would bring to an end the scholarly study of the Bible and theological scholarship in general as having any function for the church. At stake ultimately is the relevance of biblical and theological scholarship for the church, a point which is by no means always conceded by the church but upon which we at least should be of one mind.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Naperville, Ill.: Allenson; London: SCM Press, 1959.

\* *Kerygma und historischer Jesus*, Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, LI (1954), 125-53.

<sup>3</sup> Lest one project this graph into the past in terms of a concept of straight-line progress, and in a way that discredits the past, it should be noted that Shirley Jackson Case's *The Historicity of Jesus* appeared in 1912, analyzing a German debate which, though begun somewhat earlier, at least had been brought to its peak by Drews's *Die Christusmythe* of 1909 and the latter's debate with von Soden before the *Monistenbund* of Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, 1910 (cf. pp. 39f., note 2 in Case's presentation).

<sup>4</sup> Edited by James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr.

<sup>5</sup> *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus*, presented July 25, 1959, published in the *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse*, Jg. 1960, 3. Abh., 27 pp.

<sup>6</sup> "New Testament Scholarship in Prospect," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXVIII, 2 (April, 1960), 199-203, espec. 202f.

<sup>7</sup> New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961. See the review-article by James M. Robinson, "The Prophet from Nazareth," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XXX, 1 (Jan., 1962), 46-8.

<sup>8</sup> *The Prophet from Nazareth*, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> In the introduction to a collection of Bultmann's shorter writings published as *Existence and Faith*, ed. Ogden, New York: Meridian Books, 1960, p. 12. Cf., similarly, Ogden, *Christ without Myth*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961, p. 81.

<sup>10</sup> Enslin, *The Prophet from Nazareth*, pp. 212, 214f.

<sup>11</sup> "The Problem of the Messianic Self-Consciousness of Jesus," *Novum Testamentum*, IV (1960), 133.

<sup>12</sup> Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> John Macquarrie, *The Scope of Demythologizing: Bultmann and His Critics*, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960, pp. 18, 19, 91ff., 245ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>15</sup> In his review, "A Misunderstanding of Bultmann," *Interpretation*, XV, 4 (Oct., 1961), 491-96, espec. 494.

<sup>16</sup> Ed. Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthiae, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960. Its contributors are K. Adam, P. Althaus, E. Barnikol, G. Bornkamm, H. Braun, E. Brunner, R. Bultmann, F. Buri, M. Burrows, H. Conzelmann, O. Cullmann, N. A. Dahl, J. Daniélou, G. Delling, H. Diem, E. Fascher, J. de Fraine, E. Fuchs, H. Gollwitzer, L. Goppelt, W. Grundmann, O. Haendler, E. Heitsch, I. Henderson, R. Hermann, J. L. Hromádka, J. Jeremias, H. Jursch, K. Karner, W. G. Kümmel, J. Leipoldt, R. Maré, W. Michaelis, O. Michel, W. Nagel, B. Reicke, H. Riesenfeld,

B. Rigaux, R. Schnackenburg, J. Schneider, H. J. Schoeps, E. Schott, H. Schürmann, E. Schweizer, E. Stauffer, H. Urner, K. Weiss, and M. Werner. Several of the essays are reprints of earlier publications.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Fuchs's collected essays on the topic, *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, Tübingen: Mohr, Collected Papers II, 1960. Cf. also his subsequent essays, "Muss man an Jesus glauben, wenn man an Gott glauben will?," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, LVIII (1961), 45-67, and "Das Neue Testament und das hermeneutische Problem," *ibid.*, 198-226.

<sup>20</sup> "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie," *ZThK*, LVII (1960), 162-185. Cf. the critical replies by Gerhard Ebeling, "Der Grund christlicher Theologie," *ZThK*, LVIII (1961), 227-244, and Ernst Fuchs, "Über die Aufgabe einer christlichen Theologie," *ibid.*, 245-267.

<sup>21</sup> This is the substance of Conzelmann's inaugural address at Göttingen, which he does not plan to publish, since its delivery coincided with the publication of Bultmann's address which Conzelmann regards as stating adequately his own position. Cf. also Conzelmann's essay "Jesus von Nazareth und der Glaube an den Auferstandenen," in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, ed. Ristow and Matthiae, pp. 188-199.

<sup>22</sup> *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft*. . . .

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11, note 18.

<sup>25</sup> *Glauben und Verstehen*, Tübingen: Mohr, 1933, Vol. I, pp. 196ff.

<sup>26</sup> *Das Verhältnis* . . . , p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> "Gegenwart und Zukunft in der synoptischen Tradition," *ZThK*, LIV (1957), 293-95.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. the similar but independent argument by Gerhard Ebeling, *Theologie und Verkündigung. Ein Gespräch mit Rudolf Bultmann*, Vol. I of *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*, 1962, Appendix 7, "Die Frage nach dem theologischen Motiv der Evangelienbildung," pp. 125-127.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the summary by Heinrich Schlier, *Evangelische Theologie*, XI (1948/49), 462-73.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Walter Schmithals, *Die Gnosis in Korinth*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956, pp. 45ff.; also Dieter Georgi's review of this work, *Verkündigung und Forschung, Theol. Jahresbericht (1958/59)*, 1960, p. 91.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the unpublished Heidelberg dissertation of Dieter Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus in 2 Kor. 2, 14-7, 4 und 10-13*.

<sup>32</sup> This thesis has been carried out in detail by

Johannes Schreiber, "Die Christologie des Markus-evangeliums", *ZThK*, LVIII (1961), 154-83.

<sup>33</sup> To be sure, the Synoptics do not use an objective, historical Jesus-tradition, but rather the Jesus-tradition current in the church of their day. Yet, once we recognize that our historical reconstructions are themselves historically conditioned by our own situation, the actual distinction between our historical-critical reconstruction of Jesus and the kerygmaticized Jesus-tradition of the Synoptics is relativized. (Indeed, the heroic courage and impressive personality of Jesus proclaimed in the current lives of Jesus are materially not too different from the divine-man Christology of the oral tradition.) Bultmann tacitly recognizes this when he builds his argument upon the fact that Paul only rarely cites sayings of the Lord and that John does not operate like the Synoptics—points which become relevant only if Bultmann assumes that the rare Pauline citations and the Synoptic Gospels tend to be on the historical-Jesus side of the debate.

<sup>34</sup> *Das Verhältnis* . . . , p. 13, note 24.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. "Das Zeitverständnis Jesu," a lecture course of 1959-60, published in *Zur Frage nach dem historischen Jesus*, pp. 304-76. In *Kerygma und historischer Jesus* (p. 160), I attempt to achieve this goal in the presentation of my own position by replacing the term "self-understanding" with "understanding of existence," which is in turn defined in terms of Jesus' eschatological "understanding of the present." In his essay, "Das Neue Testament und das hermeneutische Problem," *ZThK*, LVIII (1961), 198-226, which he considers an indirect reply to Bultmann's criticism, Fuchs presents Jesus' message in terms of such an "understanding of time."

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ebeling's detailed reply to Bultmann, *Theologie und Verkündigung. Ein Gespräch mit Rudolf Bultmann*, Vol. I of the series *Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie*, esp. chap. 3, "Kerygma und historischer Jesus," which not only in its title but also in its argument has much in common with my position with regard to Bultmann. Unfortunately this work appeared too late (end of April, 1962) to be included in the present paper other than in such a note as this added at the time of proofreading.

<sup>40</sup> *Das Verhältnis* . . . , pp. 19-21.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22; 23, note 72.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.